

Office Locations: Columbus,
Grand Island, Hastings,
Lincoln (3 locations), Omaha



NEBRASKA MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (NEBRASKA MEP)
Serving firms statewide via a network of customer agents. The Nebraska MEP is a partnership of service providers from Nebraska Community Colleges, the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, committed to addressing the business and technical needs of Nebraska's small and medium-sized manufacturers. Contact: Dave Wright, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509, (402) 471-3755, Fax: (402) 471-3365, Email: davew@neded.org, Website: <http://nics.neded.org>

THE MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP IN NEBRASKA

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a nationwide system of services and support for smaller manufacturers to become more globally competitive. At the heart of the system is a network of affiliated, locally-based manufacturing extension centers. Each center, like Nebraska MEP, is a partnership, typically involving federal, state, and local governments; industry; educational institutions; and other sources of expertise, information and funding support.

C O M P A N Y C L I P S

Designer Blinds Of Omaha Lets In New Ideas To Implement Changes

Designer Blinds of Omaha is a custom window fashions manufacturer. The company currently employs less than 500 people. Designer Blinds began to experience stresses in production capacity as a result of significant growth in volume production. The company's many offerings of custom options in a three-day lead time led to decreasing overall output and profitability. Investment in capital equipment only provided incremental gains in improving quality and productivity. Softening demand further reduced net profit. In an effort to cut costs and improve revenue, Designer Blinds reduced its staffing, but the company's overhead still remained. The Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Nebraska MEP) heard about the problems Designer Blinds was experiencing and offered to help. The company gladly accepted.

Nebraska MEP conducted a value stream mapping field event, inviting key Designer Blinds employees and leaving half the available seats open to the public. The class is designed to provide fresh ideas for the company concerned by relying on the input of other manufacturers and experts in the field, who in turn learn about the techniques and processes of converting ideas gathered in an open forum into structured kaizen events.

The two-day events brought together many points-of-view and levels of expertise in manufacturing. Attendees at the event included personnel from five local manufacturers and members of other national MEPs. With coaching from Nebraska MEP staff, the team created a charter for a target product area, with boundaries and objectives for the internal team members. The results of the mapping event—preliminary future state maps—indicated that the company could double output without increasing the number of employees.

Continued

STATE STATS

DATA* COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Number of projects completed
with firms
952

Number of firms served for
the first time
519

Number of firms served
342

Federal cost share for current
operating year
\$599,400

State/other cost share for current
operating year
\$1,198,800

**Data as reported from center*

DATA** COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Increased sales & retained sales
\$731,000

Client capital investment
\$2,936,800

Total cost savings
\$1,597,100

Jobs (created & retained)
75

***Source: Independent client impact survey*



Throughput time could be cut by 75 percent. Collaboration between participants fueled several improvement ideas for the metal blind area, including simplified handling, walking, inventory, and changeover operations, eliminating non-value-added work that had been built into the metal blind manufacturing process. Some minor scheduling groupings further reduced changeover for metal blinds. The implementation took four weeks overall, and cost less than \$500.